GUNMASTER

12¢

SEPTEMBER

WIZARDS OF FIRE-ARMS—
CHAMPIONS OF
JUSTICE—

GUNMASTER AND BULLET THE GUN BOY

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

DON'T MISS THIS FIRST ISSUE OF—
THE MOST EXCITING BULLET-FAST
TEAM EVER TO FIGHT CRIME IN
THE WEST!

Gunmaster VS. THE BARKER

MY ROTGUT WON'T CURE A THING BUT YOU WILL BUY IT!

TRAVELING THE BACKROADS OF THE WEST, THE BARKER MADE HIS PITCH, PEDDLED HIS SNAKEBITE CURE, AND LOOTED EVERY BANK, STORE, AND CASH-BOX HE COULD REACH AS HE DROVE HIS COLORFUL WAGON FROM ONE COWTOWN TO ANOTHER! GUNMASTER WAS AT FIRST AMAZED THAT THE BARKER COULD PULL THE THINGS HE DID AND STAY IN ONE PIECE....BUT THEN GUNMASTER SAW THE BARKER'S HOLE CARD...AND HE KNEW THAT IT WASN'T SURPRISING AT ALL!

DON'T SHOOT, BULLET...IT'S ME GUNMASTER!

HE IS YOUR ENEMY, BULLET, NOT YOUR FRIEND! HE IS EVIL, A BAD MAN DRESSED IN GUNMASTER'S CLOTHES! SHOOT HIM, KILL HIM....NOW!

BANG

GUNMASTER

TRAVELING THE WESTERN TRAILS, CLAY BOONE AND BOB TELLUB DID THEIR WORK WHEREVER THEY FOUND IT...

THAT .44 NEVER DID FIRE TRUE, MR. BOONE!

SHE'LL FIRE TRUE NOW, SIR! WAIT TILL I LOAD HER UP...

THE GUNSIGHT ALWAYS CAUGHT ON MY HOLSTER TOO! IT'S USELESS FOR YOU TO ILLUSTRATE, MR. BOONE...ONLY A REALLY FAST DRAW WILL...

I'LL DO MY BEST TO GIVE THE GUN A FAIR TEST, SHERIFF!

FAIR TEST? I'LL DROP MY HAT... YOU'VE GOT TO GET A SHOT OFF BEFORE IT HITS GROUND TO BE A GOOD TEST!

DONE! DROP IT!

BAM BAM

AND THE HAT? IT HADN'T TOUCHED GROUND AS THE ECHOES OF THE FIFTH SHOT CAME BACK OFF THE BUILDINGS ACROSS THE STREET!

BAM BAM BAM

FANTASTIC! FASTEST DRAW, MOST ACCURATE SHOOTING I EVER SAW!

NO FEE, SHERIFF! YOU AND I ARE ON THE SAME SIDE IN THE WAR AGAINST CRIME! I SEE A FEW BULLET HOLES YONDER! HAD SOME RECENT TROUBLE?

SURE DID! EVER SINCE THAT MEDICINE MAN WITH HIS CONSARNED ROTGUT RHEUMATIZ MEDICINE CAME THROUGH, WE'VE HAD TROUBLE!

THIS MEDICINE MAN'S A REAL CONVINCIN' TALKER, A BARKER, THEY CALL 'EM BACK EAST! ANYHOW, 'BOUT THE TIME HE DRIFTED IN IN HIS FANCY WAGON, A BUNCH OF HARDCASES ARRIVED IN TOWN!

FIRST PLACE, I PAID FIVE DOLLARS FOR THAT JUNK AND ALL IT DID WAS MAKE ME SLEEPY! IN FACT, I WAS SNOOZIN' WHEN THE BANK WAS ROBBED! JOE HAMP'S EXPRESS OFFICE WAS ROBBED, AND KIMBALL YATES WAS SHOT IN HIS SHOP!

GU

ALL WEA

I'VE BEEN A FEW DAYS BEHIND THAT BARKER FOR A MONTH NOW...AND THERE'S BEEN TROUBLE IN EVERY TOWN HE'S BEEN IN! I'M GOIN' TO TRAVEL FASTER AND CATCH UP TO HIM! BOB, GET SOME GRAIN FOR OUR HORSES, SEE THE WATER BARREL'S FULL, WE'RE MOVIN' OUT!

SO, THE TRAVELING GUNSMITH, CLAY BOONE, WITH HIS YOUNG ASSISTANT, BOB TELLUB...OTHERWISE KNOWN AS GUNMASTER AND BULLET, THE GUN-BOY, MOVED WEST!

DON'T WASTE LEAD, BOB! YOU HAVE A TARGET THAT TIME?

BLAM BLAM

YES, SIR! EVER SINCE I GOT SNAKE-BIT DOWN IN TEXAS, I BEEN KILLING SIDEWINDERS!

CONTINUED AFTER FOLLOWING PAGE

THAT NIGHT, WHEN THEY CAMPED, CLAY BOONE BECAME GUNMASTER...AND BOB TELLUB HIS PARTNER, BULLET, THE GUN-BOY! THEY PRACTICED!

GOT YOU, BULLET!

BAM

HOW IN THE WORLD DID YOU FIRE THAT GUN WITH YOUR HANDS OVER YOUR HEAD, GUNMASTER?

SPRING OPERATED TRIGGER... SET OFF WHEN I CROUCHED AND SLAPPED MY KNEES TOGETHER! THROW A CAN FOR ME...LEFT HAND, BULLET!

SPRING-FED DERRINGER! TERRIFIC, CLAY!

BANG

SO, THEY WORKED AS A TEAM, PRACTICING CONSTANTLY, DEVISING NEW WEAPONS, PERFECTING OLDER ONES! TRAVELING FAST TO CATCH UP WITH THE MAN THEY CALLED THE BARKER!

ALWAYS WATCH OUR BACKTRAIL, AL! SEE THIS WAGON COMING SO FAST? CHECK WHO THEY ARE! ROUGH 'EM A LITTLE TO SEE HOW THEY RE-ACT!

YOU'RE A GENIUS, BOSS! I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT PEOPLE WHEN I SHOVE 'EM AROUND THAN IF I SPIED ON 'EM FOR A WEEK!

GUNSMITH! YOU'RE PROBABLY A CROOK LIKE ALL THE REST IN YORE TRADE! LAST GENT CHEATED ME I THREW HIM IN A HORSE TROUGH! I OUGHTA DO THAT TO YOU RIGHT NOW!

GUNMASTER

YOU CROOKS ARE ALL THE SAME! OVER-CHARGE HONEST COWPUNCHERS AND CALL THE SHERIFF IF HE MAKES A SQUAWK!

I'M SORRY IF YOU'VE HAD TROUBLE WITH GUNSMITHERS, MISTER! I TRY TO DO GOOD WORK FOR AN HONEST PRICE!

WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?

HARDCASE...QUICK WITH HIS GUNS.. SENT TO FIND OUT ABOUT US! WELL, HE DIDN'T LEARN MUCH!

WE DON'T SHOW OUR HOLE CARDS TILL THE SHOW-DOWN COMES, DO WE, BOB?

NO, SIR, BUT WHEN WE DO... WE LAND ON 'EM WITH BOTH FEET!

THE BARKER CIRCULATED AROUND TOWN ALL AFTERNOON, PAYING SMALL BOYS NICKELS TO HAND OUT LEAFLETS ADVERTISING THE MARVELOUS POWERS OF HIS ELIXIR! HE MADE FRIENDS, STOPPED AT THE BANK TO GET CHANGE...

OH, NO, OUR BANK HAS NEVER BEEN ROBBED! IT'S BURGLAR PROOF AND I AM THE ONLY MAN WHO HAS THE THREE KEYS AND KNOWS HOW TO USE THEM TO OPEN THE BANK AND VAULT DOORS!

YOU ARE SHREWD, SIR, MIGHTY SHREWD! I CAN SEE THE TOWN'S MONEY IS IN VERY SAFE HANDS!

BANK

THE BIG MINES MAKE SMALL SHIPMENTS OF GOLD AND SILVER THROUGH THIS OFFICE! I HAVE A NICE LITTLE BUSINESS!

RAPID EXPR COMPANY

I NEVER BLABBED ABOUT MY BUSINESS TO ANY MAN LIKE THAT BEFORE!

HE DOES HAVE A WAY ABOUT HIM, MISTER!

THAT NIGHT, THE BARKER MADE HIS FIRST PITCH/ THE SIDE OF HIS WAGON OPENED OUT AND DOWN TO FORM A STAGE/ TORCHES WERE LIT TO LIGHT THE NIGHT...HE HAD TWO HELPERS BEATING THE DRUMS AND THEIR EVIL RHYTHM FILLED THE NIGHT/

ENOUGH, MY FRIENDS, ENOUGH OF YOUR NOISE/ I CAN SEE FROM THE FACES OF THIS INTELLIGENT GROUP THAT THEY NEED NO FLIM-FLAMMERY TO KNOW THE QUALITY OF MY PRODUCT/

LOOK ME IN THE EYE, FRIENDS, YES, LET US COMMUNICATE WITH EACH OTHER/ YOU CAN SEE THAT I AM AN HONEST MAN/ YOU CAN KNOW THE TRUTH WHEN I SPEAK.. AND THE TRUTH IS...

...THAT THIS SNAKE-BIT CURE, RHEUMATIZ MEDICINE, CURE FOR CHILBLAINS, CHILDREN, CHOLERA, AND CHILLY NIGHTS IS ABSOLUTELY WORTHLESS BUT YOU WILL BUY IT, FRIENDS, WHO'S FIRST/ YOU, SIR?

THOSE STANDING IN THE BACK LAUGHED AT THIS CHARLATAN'S CONFESSION, NOT KNOWING WHY THEIR FELLOW CITIZENS PRSSED MONEY INTO THE BARKER'S HAND AND TOOK HIS ADMITTEDLY WORTHLESS MEDICINE/

OF COURSE, SIR/ THREE BOTTLES, NO CHANGE/ SIX BOTTLES, ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS, BANKER/ A CASE FOR MR. SMITH OVER THERE/

THEY'RE ACTING LIKE THE BARKER HAS THEM UNDER A SPELL/

TWO BOTTLES, MISTER/

BOB'S BUYING THAT STUFF/ HE MUST BE OFF HIS ROCKER/

BOB, WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU? THAT STUFF IS JUNK--DON'T DRINK IT!

THE BARKER SAID TO BUY IT, I...

CLAY BOONE GRABBED HIS PROTEGE AND SHOOK HIM VIOLENTLY!

HUH? OH, CLAY! WHAT HAP...OH, I REMEMBER! I BROUGHT THAT MEDICINE!

MASS HYPNOTISM! THAT FAKER SHOULD BE PUT OUT OF BUSINESS!

BUT HE WASN'T PUT OUT OF BUSINESS! HE SOLD ALL THE MEDICINE HE HAD THERE THAT NIGHT...AND THE MEDICATION WAS APPARENTLY HARMLESS ENOUGH! IN FACT, NEXT DAY SHEEPISH PURCHASERS ADMITTED THEY'D SLEPT UNCOMMONLY WELL!

DR HERBERT SMATHERS

...A FEW HERBS KNOWN TO THE INDIANS WHICH INDEED DO INDUCE SLEEP AND CAUSE NO HARMFUL EFFECTS!

THE MAN ISN'T AS BIG A RASCAL AS I THOUGHT, THEN! VERY WELL, DR. SMATHERS. THANKS FOR YOUR TIME!

BARKER CURE

AND, THAT NIGHT THE BARKER WAS BACK MAKING HIS PITCH, PEDDLING THE CURE-ALL...

STEP RIGHT UP, YOUNG MAN, HERE IS THE CURE YOU CRAVE! FOR FIVE MEASLY DOLLARS, YOU WILL...

STEADY, BOB! I NEED YOU IN FULL POSSESSION OF YOUR FACULTIES TO-NIGHT!

BARKER

MEDICINES

HE HAD ME AGAIN, CLAY! HIS EYES SEEMED TO LOCK MINE...I WANTED TO DO ANYTHING THAT HE SUGGESTED!

I KNOW...COME ON...THERE'LL BE WORK FOR US TONIGHT... AND IT WON'T BE WEARING THE CLOTHES WE'VE GOT ON!

GUNMASTER AND BULLET, THE GUN-BOY, SLID THROUGH THE SHADOWS OF THE NIGHT AS THE BARKER'S PITCH FINALLY CEASED TO ECHO THROUGH THE NIGHT! THE MILD SEDATIVE REDUCED MOST OF ITS PURCHASERS TO A HAPPY DROWSINESS...

JAIL

THEN THE BARKER CAME, LEADING THE BANKER...

YES, YES, DEAR, SIR, YOU WILL OPEN YOUR BANK AND SHOW ME THE SPLENDID SUMS OF YOUR UNBREAKABLE VAULT!

ANK

GUNMASTER WAITED...UNTIL THE BARKER WAS ACTUALLY INSIDE THE VAULT, LOADING UP WITH CASH AND THEN...

GOOD EVENING, SIR! DO YOU WISH ANY OF THE MONEY I HAVE HERE?

UP WITH YOUR HANDS, BARKER! YOU'RE GOING TO JAIL!

LOOK OUT, GUN-MASTER! BEHIND YOU!

I SEE HIM, BULLET!

BLAM

DROP IT, BARKER!

THUD

HOWDY, FOLKS! WHAT'S ALL THE SHOOTIN'...THE BARKER! WHAT'S HE DONE WRONG? WHY YOU WEARIN' THAT MASK ON YOUR FACE?

I'M THE GUNMASTER AND I JUST CAUGHT THE BARKER IN THE ACT OF ROBBING THE TOWN BANK! THE BANKER WILL TESTIFY AGAINST HIM...

JAIL

SALOON

WELL, IF THE BANKER'LL TESTIFY, I RECKON I GOT TO LOCK HIM UP! COME ON, BARKER, YOU'RE GOIN' IN A CELL!

GUNMASTER AND THE GUN-BOY HEADED FOR THEIR WAGON AND WERE ALMOST THERE WHEN SHOTS RANG OUT AGAIN ON THE QUIET STREET!

JAILBREAK! JAILBREAK! THE BARKER GOT MY GUN...HE TOOK THE CASH...MY DEPUTY HAS BEEN SHOT!

SEE IF YOU CAN TRACK DOWN THE BARKER...I'LL HANDLE THIS ONE!

BULLET, THE GUN-BOY, FOUND THE BARKER...AND IT ALMOST SPELLED DEATH FOR GUNMASTER AND A RUINED LIFE FOR THE BOY!

HANDS UP, BARKER! THIS IS THE END OF THE TRAIL!

I WON'T GIVE YOU TROUBLE, GUN-BOY! I GIVE MYSELF UP.. I ADMIT I'VE LIVED A BAD LIFE AND I WANT TO PAY!

YOU HAVE THE WEAPONS, GUN-BOY! YOU ARE THE GREATEST MARKSMAN IN THE WORLD, GREATER THAN GUNMASTER WHO IS JEALOUS AND WHO WILL KILL YOU IF YOU DON'T SHOOT FIRST! YOU MUST SHOOT HIM TO LIVE! GUN-BOY!

GUNMASTER HURRYING ALONG TO HELP BULLET, CAME ALONG JUST AS THE DULL LOOK CAME INTO BULLET'S EYES...WHEN HE TURNED, IT WAS BARKER'S WILL WHO MOVED HIS MUSCLES...BARKER'S MIND AND WILL CAUSED HIM TO RAISE THAT GUN GUNMASTER HAD TUTORED HIM SO WELL TO USE!

NOW, BULLET... SHOOT HIM BE-FORE HE KILLS YOU!

BARKER IS MY FRIEND...HE TELLS ME YOU WANT TO KILL ME? HE WOULD NOT LIE!

GUNMASTER'S SKILL WAS NEVER NEEDED SO MUCH AS IN THAT SPLIT SECOND! HIS GUN ROARED ONCE...

BAM!

...AND THEN AGAIN!

BAM!

PING

I...I ALMOST SHOT YOU, GUNMASTER! HE WAS TELLING ME TO DO IT! IS HE... DEAD?

NO...I CREASED HIS SKULL... TO KNOCK HIM OUT...SO HE'D RELEASE CONTROL OF YOUR MIND!

SO, WITH THE BARKER IN JAIL, HIS ACCOMPLICES WITH HIM...AND RESTITUTION OF THE STOLEN MONEY IN RESPONSIBLE HANDS, CLAY BOONE AND BOB TELLUB ONCE MORE TOOK THE TRAIL...

...AND EVEN THOUGH I AM FORCED AT TIMES TO BECOME GUNMASTER AND MEET VIOLENCE WITH GREATER VIOLENCE, I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT VIOLENCE IS JUSTIFIED! MAN HAS THE ABILITY TO REASON AND IT IS ONLY WHEN HIS BRAIN FAILS HIM THAT HE MUST RESORT TO FORCE!

END

CHARLTON COMICS GIVE YOU MORE!

THE FRONTIERSMAN

AN UNCLE WHO'D TRAVELED WEST ON A BUSINESS TRIP TOLD YOUNG DANIEL WHEELER OF THE GOLDEN OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FAR WEST... SO, WHEN HE WAS 21, YOUNG DAN TOOK HIS MODEST BEQUEST IN CASH WHICH HE SEWED INTO THE LINING OF HIS COAT, AND HE HEADED WEST! THE TROUBLE WITH THAT SIMPLE PRECAUTION WAS SIMPLE...THEY DIDN'T JUST STEAL MONEY IN MUSTANG FLATS...

THEY STOLE MY COAT, MARSHAL!

DON'T LOOK NOW, DUDE, BUT YORE BRITCHES ARE MISSIN' TOO! I'LL BET YUH GOT FULL OF RATTLESNAKE JUICE AN' FELL ASLEEP IN THE ALLEY!

HOSS, THIS IS A DUDE WHO LOST HIS SHIRT FIRST NIGHT IN TOWN! RECKON YOU COULD USE HIM ON YORE FREIGHT LINE? IT'LL COST YUH THE PRICE OF A SHIRT AN' BRITCHES RIGHT OFF THE BAT!

RECKON HE GOT THE JOB, MARSHAL! HE'S RIGHT PUNY AN' FELL ASLEEP IN THE ALLEY!

THE FREIGHT WAGON ROLLED WEST LATER THAT SAME DAY...

CONTINUED AFTER FOLLOWING PAGE

GUNMASTER

IT WAS HARD, ROUGH WORK...AND DAN WHEELER WOULD'VE QUIT IF HE HAD ANY-WHERE TO GO...OR A WAY TO GET THERE!

THERE WAS PLENTY OF FIGHTING...

TWO TRIPS SOUTHWEST TO SANTA FE...ANOTHER NORTH TO THE BLACK HILLS FOR BEAVER PELTS...AND MORE THAN A YEAR HAD GONE BY! DAN WHEELER HAD BEEN CHORE BOY FOR AWHILE, THEN MULE SKINNER...AND FINALLY MEAT HUNTER AND SCOUT!

THERE'S THE TOWN...NEVER HATED ANY-WHERE LIKE I DID THIS PLACE!

HEY, DIDN'T YOU PASS THROUGH THIS BURG ABOUT A YEAR BACK?

THAT'S RIGHT...I WAS HERE ONE NIGHT JUST LONG ENOUGH TO GET ROBBED!

I SAMPLED THE HOSPITALITY HERE ONCE! RECKON I'LL LIKE IT BETTER THE SECOND TIME!

MISTER, YOU GOT A HEAP OF MONEY! THERE ARE GENTS AROUND HERE WOULD PULL A PILL IN YOUR YORE DRINK AND ROB YUH BLIND IF YUH AREN'T CAREFUL!

RED-EYE LIQUOR! I'M BONE DRY AN' IT'S BEEN A LONG WHILE SINCE I HAD A LAUGH!

WHATEVER YUH SAY, STRANGER!

SHREWD EYES TOOK HIM IN... THE SUNBROWNED STRANGER: GULLELESS AND NAIVE, OBVIOUSLY LOADED WITH CASH! FAIR GAME THEY CONCLUDED, A CARCASS FOR THE VULTURES WHEN HE WAS RIPENED BY BOOZE!

...AN I NAMED THAT LITTLE PONY SNOW-WHITE CAUSE YA KNOW WHY? CAUSE.

A WHITE PONY! THEY'RE CUTE, A'RIGHT! NOTHIN' I LIKE BETTER!

THE BARTENDER HAD ONE OF THE MYSTERIOUS POWDERS MEN SOMETIMES CARRY...TO INDUCE DROWSINESS IN THE VICTIM! DAN CLUMSILY REACHED FOR THIS DELIGHTFUL CONCOCTION...AND SPILLED THE DRINK!

YUH SLOB! NOW I GOT TO MAKE ANOTHER...

FUNNY THING... DANGED GLASS MOVED...

HE DON'T NEED ANOTHER ONE OF THEM, JIGGS! YUH'RE SLEEPY NOW, AIN'T YUH, BUDDY?

YEAH, SLEEPY IS WHAT I AM! GOT TO GET SOME SHUT-EYE, THEN COME BACK HERE FO' MO' RED-EYE!

WHERE AT IS THAT SOFT BED YUH TOL' ME ABOUT, PALLY?

HE JERKED HIS HEAD RIGHT WHEN I HIT HIM! I DUNNO IF HE'S DONE IN!

THE THIEF WORKED FAST AND EFFICIENTLY! HE FOUND THE GOLD EAGLES, THEN THE SOILED BILLS FOLDED CAREFULLY IN AN INSIDE POCKET!

DON'T GET GREEDY, PAPP! ONE THIRD EACH FOR YOU, ME, AN THE BOSS!

OKAY, OKAY!

MR. FERRIS OWNS TH S PLACE AND THE GENERAL STORE...HE'S RICH BUT HE STILL WANTS HIS CUT OF ALL WE STEAL!

YOU FOOLS! THIS IS THE GENT YOU ROBBED A LITTLE MORE THAN A YEAR AGO, RIGHT?

THAT'S RIGHT... WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE! HE DIDN'T REMEMBER US?

THIS MAN'S NAME IS DAN WHEELER...HE'S CHANGED A LOT SINCE YOU TWO STOLE ALL BUT HIS UNDERWEAR WHEN HE ARRIVED ON THE STAGECOACH FROM BACK EAST! HE AIN'T A DUDE NO MORE!

SO? HE DIDN'T TURN INTO ANY GUNSLINGER IN LESS THAN A YEAR!

NO, COYOTE... BUT I DID TURN INTO A GROWED MAN! AND A MAN CAN TAKE CARE OF WEEVILS LIKE YOU ANY TIME AT ALL!

THEY WORKIN' THE DUDE OVER IN THERE?

LET 'EM BE, MARSHAL! WHEELER KNOWS THE SCORE THIS TIME! JUST STAND BY TO COUNT THE BODIES!

ONE SHOT WAS FIRED...WHEN THE OWNER OF THE PLACE TRIED TO GET AT HIS SIX-GUN!

BLAM!

THAT THE COAT THEY STOLE FROM YOU, DAN?

THIS IS IT...BEEN HANGIN' ON THAT DOOR PROB'LY EVER SINCE THEY TORE IT OFF MY BACK LAST TIME I WAS HERE! I CAN STILL FEEL MY MONEY SEWED INSIDE THE THE LI'N.NG!

I'M RETIRIN', MARSHAL! THIS YOUNG FELLA'S MY PARTNER NOW.. I'VE BEEN WAITIN' FOR THE RIGHT MAN TO HELP ME OUT!

RIGHT MAN? WHAT KIND OF MAN?

I AIN'T AFRAID TO CALL YOU WHAT YOU ARE, DAN WHEELER! YOU'RE NO DUDE NOW...YOU'RE A FRONTIERSMAN, GOOD AS ANY AN' BETTER THAN MOST!

END

CHARLTON COMICS GIVE YOU MORE!

GUNMASTER in CANYON OF DEATH

CLAY BOONE, GUNSMITH, HAD TURNED INTO GUNMASTER, THE FAMED AND FEARED ENEMY OF EVIL. BULLET, THE GUN-BOY, WAS SIDING HIM AS THEY TRACKED DOWN WHAT THEY THOUGHT WAS A MERCILESS GANG OF CLAIM-JUMPERS AND GOLD-THIEVES IN THE CALIFORNIA CANYON WHERE DEATH SEEMED TO DWELL. GUNMASTER FACED NO ORDINARY KILLER AND LOOTER. GUNMASTER SUDDENLY FOUND HIMSELF UNDER ATTACK BY THE HARDIEST FIGHTING MEN IN HISTORY...THE COSSACKS OF THE DON.. RIDING LIKE THE WIND, AT THE ORDERS OF A MAN WHO SET NO VALUE ON HUMAN LIFE. A MAN WHOSE DREAMS ENCOMPASSED THE WORLD. PRINCE KUKOV, WHO PLANNED TO CONTROL EVERY NUGGET AND GRAIN OF GOLD ON THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT, THE COSSACK WHOSE DREAMS OF EMPIRE WOULD NOT STOP IN CALIFORNIA..KUKOV, THE CZAR OF THE GOLDEN WEST!

GUNMASTER

FROM MOSCOW, CATHERINE THE GREAT BANISHED A REBELLIOUS ROMANOV PRINCE. VLADIMIR WAS SENT TO A SUFFER AN OUTPOST MANNED BY DON COSSACKS. THERE BAND CAVALRYMEN RAISED THE SON OF THE EXILED ROYAL REBEL AS ONE OF THEMSELVES

KUKOV GREW TO MANHOOD, TUTORED IN THE CRUEL ARTS OF THE COSSACKS, IMBUED WITH DREAMS OF GLORY BY HIS SICK AND DYING ROYAL FATHER.

TAKE YOUR DON COSSACKS, SEEK ADVANTAGEOUS ALLIANCES WITH THE COSSACKS OF ASTRAKHAN AND AMUR AND KUBAN. TAKE THE SOFT FOOLS IN MOSCOW AND MAKE THEM BEG FOR MERCY!

NO...I WILL STAY AWAY FROM THE CITIES. I WILL CROSS SIBERIA, GO TO NORTH AMERICA WHERE RUSSIA HAS ESTABLISHED COLONIES AND A PROSPEROUS FUR TRADE.

THERE'S GOLD IN AMERICA. TONS AND TONS OF PURE GOLD. WITH THIS GOLD I WILL RULE THE WORLD.

WITH HIS COSSACKS AT HIS BACK, DREAMING HIS MAD DREAM, PRINCE KUKOV RODE EAST, CROSSING SIBERIA TOWARD THE BERING STRAIT OVER WHICH HE LED HIS MEN TO THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT.

SUTTER HAD FOUND GOLD IN CALIFORNIA IN 1848.

AND BY THE BEGINNING OF THE CIVIL WAR, THERE WERE MINERS EVERYWHERE IN THE MOUNTAINS OF THE WEST, IGNORING DANGER FROM THE INDIANS, THE ELEMENTS, AND THE BEASTS OF PREY, HUMAN AND FOUR-LEGGED

UNINFECTED BY THE LUST FOR GOLD THAT RAGED AROUND THEM, A MAN AND A BOY TRAVELED THE CRUDE ROADS OF THE FRONTIER...THE SIGN ON HIS WAGON PROCLAIMED HIM TO BE A GUNSMITH..

MUST BE A VERY LARGE GANG OF VICIOUS CRIMINALS, CLAY!

PLENTY OF CLAIM-JUMPERS WORK IN' THESE HILLS, BOB!

A GUNSMITH! EXACTLY WHAT I NEED TO KEEP MY COSSACK'S WEAPONS IN REPAIR AT THE FORT!

SO THAT NIGHT, THE COSSACKS RODE!

GUNMASTER

RIDERS COMING, SIR! THE REVOLVER-RIFLES WILL...

TOO MANY EVEN FOR OUR LATEST WEAPONS, BOB! JUST SIT TIGHT!

CLAY BOONE, AS GUNMASTER, HAD RIDDEN FAR AND SEEN MANY THINGS...BUT HE'D NEVER BEEN AS STARTLED AS HE WAS WHEN HE SAW PRINCE KLKOV RIDE INTO THE CLEARING!

I NEED YOU, GUNSMITH! YOU WILL SERVE ME, KLKOV OF THE ROMANOVS, HENCEFORTH!

I DO NOT SERVE ANY MAN! YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO BE HERE WEARING THAT UNIFORM IN MY COUNTRY! THE TROOPS AT FORT CASS...

...ARE STUPID AND THEIR HORSES ARE SLOW! HARNESS YOUR HORSES -- YOU AND THE BOY ARE COMING WITH ME!

COME ON, CLAY, WE CAN RUN FOR IT...EVEN IF WE CAN'T FIGHT!

BOB, WE'VE GOT TO FIND OUT WHAT THEY'RE UP TO AND WHERE THEIR HEADQUARTERS ARE! WE AREN'T RUNNIN' ANYWHERE!

SO, AS PRISONERS OF THE PRINCE, CLAY BOONE AND BOB TELLUB RODE WEST INTO THE DEEP CALIFORNIA VALLEYS!

HE'S PLENTY SMART! THERE'S NO GOLD IN THESE VALLEYS...NO PROSPECTORS TO NOSE AROUND!

THERE ARE INDIANS, THOUGH! REDSHIRT, A CHEYENNE WAR-CHIEF, ROOSTS IN THESE HILLS! THEY WON'T LIKE HAVING RUSSIAN CAVALRY HANGIN' AROUND THEIR GAME TRAILS CHASIN' THE BUFFALO, ELK, AND SMALL GAME!

BEHOLD THE FIRST CAP TAL OF MY EMPIRE! LATER OF COURSE, I W L RLLE FROM SACRAMENTO OR SAN FRANCISCO! COME, BOONE, MY CAP- TAINS WILL HAVE PLENTY OF WORK TO DO ON OUR WEAPONS!

WEAPONS PAIRI D

NO ARTILLERY, BOB, NOT, CE? I'M SURE GLAD OF THAT!

STOP WAGON THERE!

CLAY P D'S ALL WEAPONS REPAIRED

GET OFF!

JUST A MINUTE, YOU!

I SAY OFF, YOU GET OFF, DAH!

HEY, WATCH IT!

CLAY!

GET BACK, BOB!

SO? YOU WISH TO BE DRAGGED BY A WILD HORSE, FOOL? OR BE TIED TO TWO HORSES WHICH ARE DRIVEN IN TWO DIRECTIONS?

I ACCIDENTALLY DROPPED THE BOTTLE! YOUR PET THUG WILL RECOVER...THE CONTENTS WERE ONLY AMMONIA, SULPHUR, AND ONE OR TWO OTHER CHEMICALS I FIND USEFUL IN MY WORK!

YOU COME WITH ME!

IT WAS A LARGE STONE STRUCTURE... WITH A SINGLE DOOR INTO THE WALLS/ PRINCE KUKOV HAD THE ONLY KEY, IT SEEMED/ HE LET THEM IN AND...

YOU SEE? THE STUPID PROSPECTORS GATHER THE GOLD...AND WHEN THEIR SACKS ARE FULL, I GATHER THEIR HARVEST!

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S BEEN TURNING THE GOLD-FIELDS INTO GRAVEYARDS!

HOW LONG DO YOU THINK YOU'LL GET AWAY WITH IT?

YOU FOOL, WHO CAN STOP ME? YOU?

I'LL FIX YOU FOR THAT!

PUT THEM WITH THE OTHER PRISONERS FOR NOW, IVAN! DON'T DISABLE THEM UNLESS IT BECOMES NECESSARY! WE NEED THESE TWO TO REPAIR THE BROKEN GUNS AND SWORDS!

DON'T RESIST, BOB! REMEMBER WHAT I ALWAYS SAY.

VIOLENCE IS NEVER JUSTIFIED! HE WHO LIVES BY THE SWORD SHALL DIE BY THE SWORD! ONLY THE STUPID MUST RESORT TO FORCE!

TAKE HIM AWAY BEFORE I BECOME WEAK FROM LAUGHING! THE GUNSMITH IS A FOOL!

PRINCE KUKOV'S PLANS WERE MADE/ HE HAD PLUNDERED GOLD CAMPS AND MINERS IN CALIFORNIA, IDAHO, AND AS FAR AWAY AS THE FABLED CRIPPLE CREEK CAMP IN MONTANA/ NOW, HIS STORES OF GOLD WERE GREAT AND HE RALLIED HIS FORCES...

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY AMERICAN OUTLAWS PAID WITH STOLEN GOLD AND TWO HUNDRED RENEGADE INDIANS BOUGHT WITH GEWGAWS, GOLD, AND TRADE WHISKEY/ AND, OF COURSE, MY COSSACKS...

MY COSSACKS OF THE DON ARE THE CORE OF MY PLANS FOR CONQUEST/ NONE CAN STAND BEFORE THEIR FIERCE CHARGE/ WITH ME TO LEAD THEM, WE WILL WIPE ALL RESISTANCE OFF THE EARTH/

CLAY BOONE AND BOB TELLUP WATCHED THE ARRIVAL OF OUTLAWS AND INDIANS...THEY WATCHED THE ENDLESS PRACTICE OF THE CASSOCKS, FIGHTING EVERY WAKING HOUR, MAKING READY FOR AN INEVITABLE FIGHT/

THE ARROGANT RUSSIAN FOOL/ HE THINKS HE CAN RULE THE WHOLE WILD WEST/

LESS PRACTICAL MEN HAVE TAKEN NATIONS/ THIS SCOUNDREL MUST BE STOPPED/ COSSAKS! PRESENT IN CALIFORNIA?

WE'D HEARD RUMORS OF A FEW RUSSIAN FUR TRADERS, THAT'S ALL/

THERE ARE ELEVEN OF US HERE/ WITH THESE ELEVEN MEN, I'VE GOT TO KEEP KUKOV FROM HIS PLAN TO RAZE ALL OF CALIFORNIA AND BEYOND/

BOB, YOU SQUIRM THROUGH THE BARS... GET TO THE WAGON AND USE THE AMMONIA MIXTURE IN THE THIN GLASS BALLS TO GIVE THE COSSACK GUARDS AND THE INDIANS SOMETHING ELSE TO THINK ABOUT/ GET US OUT OF HERE AND I'LL TAKE OVER THEN/

BOB TELLUB KNEW WHAT HAD TO BE DONE/ IN THE DARKNESS HE REACHED THE WAGON LOADED WITH ALL THE TOOLS, WEAPONS, AND POWDERS SO DEAR TO A GUNMAKER'S HEART/ BOB TELLUB QUICKLY MADE THE NECESSARY CHANGES AND BECAME...GUN-BOY/

I HATE THESE THINGS... THEY WORK GREAT, THOUGH/

AN AMMONIA COCKTAIL THROWN TOWARD THE ONCOMING COSSACKS SENT THEM INTO PAROXYSMS OF STRANGLED COUGHING...

GO RIGHT IN THE GUARD-ROOM DOOR... THROW A COUPLE OF THESE THINGS/

POOF

POOF

A MOMENT LATER, BULLET THE GUN-BOY HAD OPENED THE DOOR...SOMEHOW CLAY BOONE BECAME THE GUNMASTER WHILE THE OTHERS GOT OUT THE DOOR/

THE GUNSMITH WHO HATED VIOLENCE... WHERE DID HE GO? IS HE...?

NEVER MIND HIM/ PEACEMAKERS AKE FINE IN THEIR PLACE BUT WE NEED ACTION NOW/

PRINCE KUKOV IS LEADING HIS COSSACKS AFTER US PERSONALLY, GUNMASTER/

HEAD FOR THE GUNSMITH'S WAGON/ WE'LL TAKE COVER IN THE BRUSH/ COME ON/

CONTINUED AFTER FOLLOWING PAGE

GUNMASTER STOOD HIS GROUND ALONE... AS THE COSSACKS MADE THE EARTH ITSELF TREMBLE TO THE THUNDER OF THEIR CHARGE!

HANG ON...GUNMASTER WILL BE WITH US IN A MOMENT!

POW

PRINCE KUKOV'S THRUST MISSED THE DODGING CRIME-FIGHTER AND GUNMASTER SEIZED HIS CHANCE...SWINGING UP BEHIND THE COSSACK!

UFF

THUD!

HERE...WHERE THEY'VE BEEN CUTTING LOGS!

HOLLOWED OUT LOGS! MILITARY IDEA...USE THEM TO PIPE WATER INSIDE THE FORT FROM OUTSIDE SUPPLY! BURY THE LOGS, OF COURSE!

CLAY

QUICKLY! WE'LL BORE A TOUCH-HOLE FOR THE FUSE, PLUG THE HEAVY END OF THE LOG, PUT IN THE POWDER, WADDING, AND THEN NUTS, BOLTS, AND PEBBLES!

THE LOGS WILL SPLIT, OF COURSE! BUT THERE ARE EIGHT LOGS...WE CAN FIRE EACH ONE ONCE AND THAT WILL BE ENOUGH! THEY'LL THINK A DIVISION OF REGULAR TROOPS HAVE THE FORT SURROUNDED!

AT THE FORT ITSELF, COUNT KUKOV RECEIVED THE REPORT OF HIS UNDERLINGS...

THE ESCAPED PRISONERS ARE GONE, EXCELLENCY! THEY MAY BRING OTHERS...

NONSENSE! EVEN REGULAR TROOPS COULD NOT PENETRATE OUR DEFENSES...UNLESS, OF COURSE, THEY HAD FIELD ARTILLERY PIECES!

CHARLTON COMICS GIVE YOU MORE!

AT THAT MOMENT...GUNMASTER, MOTIONING THE OTHERS BACK, LIT THE FUSE OF ONE OF HIS WOODEN CANNON/

HISSSSSSS

THE CANNON EXPLODED WITH A HUGE ROAR...SECONDS LATER, FRAGMENTS OF WOOD SCREAMED THROUGH THE TREES...

PRINCE KUKOV WILL THINK WE'VE GOT HEAVY ARTILLERY!

BOOM

GOOD GRIEF...A RIFLE WITH A SIX-SHOOTER ACTION! THEY'LL THINK THERE'S A COMPANY OF INFANTRY OUT THERE!

TEN MEN FIRING SIX-SHOOTER RIFLES AS FAST AS THEY COULD PULL THE TRIGGER MADE KUKOV BEGIN TO WONDER WHO WAS OUT THERE FIRING/ AND THE ARTILLERY FIRE WAS SHATTERING THE MORALE OF ALL HIS MEN!

ME QUIT!

AFTER ME YOU QUIT, INJUN! LET THE COSSACKS WIN THIS ONE BY THEMSELVES! ~

VOOM

-ZING

BAM

KUKOV HIMSELF HAD NO STOMACH FOR SUCH WELL-ARMED ENEMIES! HE AND HIS COSSACKS ROLLED UP BLANKETS AND WERE IN THE SADDLES MOMENTS LATER...

VOOM

ZING

ZING

ZING

BAM

THEY'RE WITHIN RIFLE RANGE, GUNMASTER! WHY DON'T...

HE DIDN'T MURDER ANYONE...HE STOLE GOLD BUT HE HASN'T GOT IT WITH HIM...AND HE'LL RETURN TO SIBERIA IN DISGRACE/ HE'LL BE WELL PUNISHED FOR ALL THE CRIMES HE'S COMMITED SPURRED ON BY THAT LUST FOR POWER/

END